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ABSTRACT

The community literacy program of Western District Adult Basic Education in Georgia was examined to demonstrate how the meaning and value of literacy is a function of specific local institutions. The goal of the examination was to theorize literacy by constructing a localized framework for understanding literacy within a given institution in order to change that institution. The key considerations driving the analysis were what literacy is and by whom, in whose interests, and how a literacy program can be designed collaboratively so as to be meaningful to its participants. The examination of the policies and practices of Western District Adult Basic Education's community literacy program focused on the following issues: (1) disciplinary gaps and institutional power; (2) locating the meaning and value of literacy; (3) community literacy programs as vehicles for helping people gain access to resources, knowledge, literacies, and institutions; (5) the concepts of community and community literacy; and (6) tactics for making educational institutions more relevant and responsive to learners. It was concluded that institutions that affect community literacy programs can be redesigned in a participatory fashion that both empowers the programs' users and improves the institutions attempting to meet users' needs. (Twenty figures/tables are included. The bibliography contains 203 references.) (MN)

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